

CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO



The Association of Classical & Christian Schools



Christian Education

We address “Christian” first because we are first, and foremost, Christian schools. Our understanding of all things, including all things pertaining to education, is shaped by Christian truth. Thus, to acquire a sufficient understanding of classical education, one must first be able to view it from a Christian perspective.

The ACCS Confession of Faith defines the scope and elements of Christian truth individuals or organizations must affirm to be considered for membership in the ACCS. We see no need to add a second definition here as the Confession is sufficient. However, we do want to emphasize certain principles inherent in the Confession of Faith as they relate to education:

Sovereignty

God is sovereign. He possesses absolute authority over all things. He has created all things, sustains all things, and governs all things.

Antithesis

To provide a God-centered and truly Christian education, it is necessary to break completely free from the educational philosophies that surround us. We must build from the ground up, with the Scriptures as the foundation, both our educational philosophies and the framework in which we understand and present all subject matter.

Worldview

The Christian worldview is the “lens” through which we see, understand, and teach all things. It is antithetical to all other worldviews and thus requires that we present all ideas and concepts as part of a larger whole defined by Christian truth.

Neutrality

Because God is sovereign over all of His creation, there is no aspect of creation that does not reflect His glory and truth; hence, there is no place, subject, or issue that is neutral and that does not point to the Creator of all.

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CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR THE WORLD

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School Boards

by Patch Blakey

What is the most important component of a classical Christian school? I would hasten to assert that it is the school board. The school board, more than any other “agent” of the school is responsible for the successful operation of the school. A corollary to this is the equally weighty fact that the school board is also responsible for the failures of the school. As the board goes, so goes the school.

Someone may respond that I am being too broad, too sweeping in my characterization of the school board as being responsible for the success or failure of the school. But, this is the nature of the school board. It is ultimately responsible for everything that happens at the school, just as a husband is responsible for everything that happens in his marriage and family or the captain of a ship is responsible for everything that occurs within his command. Responsibility and accountability have a telos, an end point. With schools, it is the school board.

A striking example of this level of responsibility is found in the first man, Adam. Adam was responsible not only for guarding the well-being of his wife, but for all of mankind as well. He failed in that responsibility and we are all the recipients of that failure. In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote of our father Adam saying, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). In the same way, the New Adam Jesus Christ is responsible for the salvation of His bride, the Church. “But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by

the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many” (Romans 5:15).

Carrying this responsibility is a heavy burden. For this reason, it is good to look to Scripture for some helpful principles on the formation of the school board. Solomon wisely wrote, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor . . . And a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl. 4:9, 12b). Sandwiched between these verses are words to the effect that there is help, mutual support, and strength in numbers. This same idea is mirrored in Proverbs, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov. 11:4; see also 15:22 and 24:6). The idea that these verses convey is that a multitude of leaders is helpful in bearing the burden of responsibility for the school. It is both an aid and a protection. Paul directed the appointment of a multitude of elders in the churches. There is confidence in knowing that others may see things that were not observed by another board member, or may see the issues in a different light.

We all have God-given gifts which implies areas of strength, but this implicitly further implies that we all have areas of weakness. The Church, the body of Christ, is comprised of members with a diversity of abilities. “If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He

pleased. If they were all one part, where would the body be?” (1 Cor. 12:17-19). Likewise, there should be a diversity of gifts on the school board, and the various members should respect and appreciate that they are all different, but essential to the proper operation of the school.

While there is diversity of gifts, there needs to be unity of vision, purpose, and commitment. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:2). There needs to be unanimous agreement in the basics: the statement of faith, the philosophical direction of the school, mutual submission, and commitment to the school that they oversee.

If the board can’t agree on a mutually acceptable statement of faith, then it will be an ever-present source of conflict. The same holds for sharing a common commitment to the classical Christian methodology. While there may be varying views on what constitutes classical Christian education, the board members must be fully agreed on what defines “classical Christian” for their school. Likewise, there must be a sense of mutual submission: “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

After participating in the majority of ACCS accreditation visits and observing as many school boards, as well as personally serving on two boards at two different schools, the

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boards that worked the best from my observations were the ones which accepted full responsibility for every aspect of the school's operations, but were seldom seen in the daily operation of the school. They did not need to be involved because they had established policies to cover the majority of situations encountered at the school. They had wisely selected an administrator who would faithfully execute the approved policy. They trusted their administrator to act in accordance with the spirit of their policies when circumstances arose that policy did not specifically cover. These

boards were also not controlled by a single, domineering personality. There was respectful give and take among board members, but once a decision had been reached, they all owned it inside and out as their own regardless of their prior positions on the issue. They made the reading of the Scriptures and prayer priorities at each board meeting. They were thankful for all of God's providences, and communicated that thankfulness often, both privately and publicly. And there is more that characterized these successful boards, but this should suffice for the time.

These are only some initial thoughts. The articles in this issue provide much more meat than I have briefly suggested above. I might add that there is far more to making a good board than we could hope to publish in a single issue of *Classis*. Nonetheless, school boards are so key to the successful operation of a school that we thought it essential to begin the discussion at some point. I trust there will be more to be said in the future on the subject of school boards.



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Establishing a Board

by Rick Hall, Westminster Academy

Establishing a board for a classical and Christian school is the most important decision that the founding families will ever make. The board will set the vision and direction of the school for years to come. This does not mean that board members must be experts in classical and Christian education, but they must be committed to learn and to grow in their understanding. They must have a clear vision of the direction they intend to lead the school. Because they are attempting to impart a love of learning, they should be

lifelong learners themselves. The board will set the tone for the school and as such, board members must be committed individually and corporately to “repairing the ruins of our first parents.”

Determining who will serve on the board and how they will be chosen is of utmost importance. The school’s founding families should resolve this issue early in the process of establishing the school. Those involved will quickly learn that God brings different people with different gifts and backgrounds together. Some will have a better understanding of what a classical and Christian education is than others. Some will be better read than others. Some will have a better understanding of biblical worldview than others. Some will be more gifted in financial matters. The founders must recognize the different gifts that God has brought together and utilize them to the fullest without compromising on principle.

Hopefully, all of those chosen to serve on the board share the same philosophy of education and commitment to biblical principles.

As the founders begin discussing the formation of the school board, there are several questions that should be answered regarding who will serve and how they will be chosen. Will the members be

that the original board members faced in determining a statement of faith, the bylaws, policies, curricula, etc. Again, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but the founding families should consider these issues in the beginning with the understanding that these procedures will be harder to change

once the school has been established.

Another question that should be answered is whether or not women should serve on the board. The Bible gives clear instruction on women in leadership in the

church but does not address school boards. However, there are certain principles to think about. Women see things that men have difficulty seeing. Many times, especially if they have homeschooled, women know what curricula are better than others and may have a better understanding of what makes a good teacher. At the same time, God made men and women different. Because women tend to be somewhat more emotional than men (a gift from God), the sometimes volatile nature of board meetings could affect them differently than men. Women’s feelings tend to get hurt more than men’s. At least one ACCS school has couples serve on its board with only one vote per family. Theoretically at least, husbands and wives discuss issues before board meetings and resolve them within the context of the family.

Once the board has been established, it will need to make decisions on a number of different items. One of the first decisions that a board should make is how

This article is included in the ACCS Start-up Notebook. All of the notebook authors have either helped to start or operate classical Christian schools. Order online at accsedu.org

permanent or temporary? Will future board members be elected or chosen? A school may have all permanent board members or a mixture of permanent and temporary. One school may have open elections for subsequent board members while another may opt to have subsequent board members chosen by the existing board. There are advantages to each method of selection with no right or wrong answer. However, the goal in answering these questions is to ensure that the school maintains its original vision and does not experience “mission drift.” Board members that begin serving after the school has been established may not have the same understanding of a classical and Christian education that the founders had. They may not have an adequate appreciation of the time and effort required to lead a young school in its development. Nor will they have as clear an understanding of all the issues

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it will make decisions. A board may require a simple majority, a supermajority, or a unanimous vote. Certain types of decisions may be determined by a simple or supermajority while others, such as a change in the statement of

and curriculum will require the most energy. The board should consider seeking input from other ACCS schools regarding both. However, the policies and curriculum of one school might not work as well for another. Most

to be reinforced and encouraged over and over again by the board throughout the school is outlined in Matthew 18:15–17. If a dispute or misunderstanding of any kind occurs between two parties, the grieved party must approach the other party with the goal of resolving whatever conflict or misunderstanding occurred. If the grievance cannot be resolved, the grieved party can appeal to the next highest authority with the final arbiter being the board. There will be times when the grieved party for whatever reason does not first approach the other party but rather comes to a board member and expresses his or her concern. The board member must be careful to refer the grieved party back to the person with whom the misunderstanding or dispute occurred. In many instances when the grieved party is a parent, the information comes from his child. In most cases, a child's understanding of the particular situation is tainted from his own point of view. Most disputes or misunderstandings can be cleared up if handled in this biblical fashion. The ACCS encourages each member school to have a policy regarding conflict resolution based upon the principles in Matthew 18:15–17.

A potential trouble spot for young and old schools is making decisions based on pragmatism and expediency versus principled action. Our American culture developed the religion of pragmatism and it has infiltrated the church. We know how to make things work. We have an entrepreneurial spirit that leads us to want to make things happen. We need to be careful that this entrepreneurial spirit does not cause us to violate principled action. Sometimes this might

*Better two or three people putting their hearts
and heads together in unity than a dozen,
highly-diverse individuals, no matter what
their individual strengths, banging away.*

faith and bylaws and the hiring of a headmaster and faculty, may require a unanimous vote.

Another item that needs to be addressed early is establishing the school's statement of faith. At a minimum, the school's statement of faith should fall within Christian orthodoxy. Many classical Christian schools have included a Reformed soteriology and other Reformed distinctives in their statements of faith. Remember that the more narrow the statement of faith, the more difficult it will be to maintain as there will be opportunities to compromise along the way. However, a school's statement of faith should be set in stone and not easily changed. The board should require its members, the headmaster and all of the faculty to subscribe to and support the school's statement of faith.

Other items that need to be addressed before a school opens are bylaws, policy manuals, curriculum, etc. These all take a good bit of time, thought and effort and should not be taken lightly. Like the statement of faith, the bylaws should be rather permanent and not easily changed. Establishing the school's policies

schools, as issues arise, make changes and additions to their policies. At the same time, a school should constantly examine its curriculum to determine if what is being offered best accomplishes the goals and objectives of the school.

It is important to remember that the board should act and speak as a unit, not as a collection of individuals. After the board has made a decision, each board member should support that decision even if the decision did not go his or her way. If a particular board member was on the minority side of an issue, he should be careful not to undermine that decision by questioning the decision in public. At the same time, individual board members should be careful not to speak authoritatively on an issue if the board has not made a decision regarding that issue. In the early days of a school's life, there will be many questions asked of individual board members that the board has not addressed. The temptation is to answer the question rather than wait until the board has decided upon that issue. Board members should only speak for the board when they have delegated authority from the board.

Another principle that needs

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require the board to be patient and wait for God's leading. We need to make decisions based upon biblical principles rather than our preferences or what we know works. A school is not a democracy so we should not bow to opinion polls. We need to stand on the promises of God's Word and trust Him for the consequences.

If you were counseling a newly forming board as to what areas they should focus their attention on in the early years, what would your counsel to them be? Once the school has been operational for a few years, what should they focus their energies and attention on? As soon as the school has acquired the status of "well-established," what will be their danger spots? What safeguards should be built into each development plan that will keep each school from becoming "just another Christian school?"

This is a very multi-faceted series of questions, some of which demand more attention than I can adequately give here. But for the sake of the readers, I will try to address a couple of central points regarding school boards, new or experienced. Boards, being in the authoritative position they are, are like fathers in a family. No one else holds the same level of ability to do great good or great harm to the members of the family or the school. Whenever I have heard of serious problems in schools, classical or "just plain" Christian schools, I am not surprised anymore to hear that the board has stumbled in some manner. Rarely can a single teacher, or even an administrator, have the devastating impact on a school that a board can. I realize this all sounds very negative, but we need to start somewhere and I like to get the bad news

out of the way or at least know what the dangers are up front.

First and foremost, boards, (I am assuming a classical, Christian context in all this) must be agreed in writing as to the primary philosophy and purposes. That is the cement footing upon which everything is built. Far too many beginning schools, for the sake of numbers, try to wrap their philosophical arms around almost everybody that wants "in." Can you spell d-i-s-a-s-t-e-r? Better two or three people putting their hearts and heads together in unity than a dozen, highly diverse individuals, no matter what their individual strengths, banging away. So, once again, we need to believe that ideas have consequences. Boards need to agree on the ideas, very completely.

Secondly, and last for now, boards need to understand, and agree upon, their own nature and structure. Sounds boring, doesn't it? It stops being boring when it's ignored. Tempers flaring, people leaving the school in sin, parents wondering what will happen next—that is the alternative. Questions the board must ask itself and answer clearly (in writing) would include:

1. When does the board exercise its authority?

The board can exercise its authority only in an agenda-set meeting.

2. Do individual board members have authority outside of a board meeting?

The members have authority only insofar as the board has appointed them to a task.

3. Who is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the school, in

most scenarios?

The board is ultimately responsible.

4. What qualifications should we have for board members?

Board members should meet biblical and practical qualification.

5. How are board members elected?

A popular vote has its shortcomings.

6. Should husbands and wives serve together on a board?

No, avoid this if possible—husbands are preferred. Whenever possible, male leadership is a good watchword.

7. How will board members demonstrate their understanding of and commitment to the school's philosophical base?

Reading is a must!

8. Which board members are indispensable to the future of the school?

No board members are indispensable, if it's planned well.

These are just some conversation starter questions. We didn't touch on the role of the board to the administrator or parents at large. But if school boards take the above seriously, there is hope that the school will not crash and burn in its second or third year, or worse . . . continue to exist but lapse into the coma called the "typical Christian school-itis."

The Nature of Corporate Authority

by Douglas Wilson, Christ Church

More often than not, Christian schools are run by boards. And not surprisingly, if the board is wise, the school is blessed. If the board is foolish, the school suffers. And sometimes the school is just plain lucky. The point of this brief article is that, if your school is in this last category, you will be

necessity here is that boards must understand what constitutes board action and what does not.

Visionaries are often high rpm people. The same thing often goes for the wives of visionaries. This means, for example, that if someone makes a comment in passing to this board member that

seconded, discussed, passed with the appropriate margin of votes, entered in minutes, and duly-approved. Board discussion, consensus, debate, etc. does not constitute formal board action.”²

In order to function in this way, the board has to understand the importance of like-mindedness. This does not necessarily mean that all the votes are unanimous, but it does mean that when a decision is made (even though two voted against), the decision was made *by the entire board*. “Don’t blame me, I didn’t vote for it” is a good example of someone who doesn’t understand the nature of corporate decision making at all. When the vote doesn’t go my way on a curriculum decision, let us say, once the vote is over, I should fully support the board’s decision—as though I did vote for it. As Trumpkin says in *Prince Caspian*, he knows the difference between giving advice and taking orders. When the time for giving advice is past, then it is time to submit.

We must beware of pluralistic assumptions creeping into our views of how a board should be constituted. We tend to think that diversity (all by itself) is a good thing. But the Scriptures require like-mindedness. We should strive for as much like-mindedness as we can get. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

Now of course, no human authority is absolute, and this includes the boards of classical Christian schools. There may come a time when a decision is

Debate, discuss, decide. And when the decision is made, then everyone support it.

encouraged not to press your luck. And here, as with so many things, it is profoundly important to think in terms of principles instead of methods. Wisdom from the board is not possible if individual board members are not wise. Some board members are wise and some, unfortunately, are otherwise. If we want to look for a good description of wisdom in Christian leadership, then the character qualifications for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy and Titus are a good place to start. Once that is done, we may move on to the subject of school boards.

Before considering particular board duties, it is important to nail down the nature of board authority. What kind of authority does a board have? How is it exercised? One of the most common problems in board-run schools is the assumption made by strong-willed board members (who often are the visionaries who started the school) that they constitute full board authority in their own person, and that they carry it around with them. *This is not the case.* A basic

there is a problem of some sort in the third grade class (where the board member’s daughter is going to be next year), it often seems like the most natural thing in the world for that board member to go ask the third grade teacher, “What’s up?” The third grade teacher does not see an interested parent, but rather a powerful and somewhat intimidating member of her boss’s boss. She can respond to the request as though she were being spoken to by the entire board. But this is not the case at all.

At Logos School, our policy manual states this principle plainly: “Each board member is required to remember that the authority of the board is corporate. Individual board members, in dealing with administration, staff, or parents, may not represent the board as a whole unless specifically instructed to do so by the board, or required to do so by the bylaws or this policy manual.”¹ And our bylaws come at it from another angle: “The board will be considered as having formally acted when, in a duly-constituted meeting, a proposal is moved,

Douglas Wilson is the pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho. He is a founding board member of both Logos School and New Saint Andrews College.

Corporate Authority . . .

so momentous that you cannot in good conscience support it. Say the board just approved a curriculum put out by *I Love the Devil Press*. Of course, it is then time to tender a resignation. But the vast majority of board conflicts are caused by a lack of submission, and not because the board adopted materials for the Bible class put out by the Watchtower Society.

In order to remember this principle, aggressive board members must make a point of not running ahead of what the board has done, and stubborn board members must make a point of not lagging behind what the board has done. Debate, discuss, decide. And when the decision is made, then everyone support it.

What sorts of things should a board be doing? What are the basic board duties? With all this in mind, whither and what? These basic board duties are helpfully outlined by Biehl and Engstrom.³

- A. Appreciation, recognition and encouragement
- B. Decision making
- C. Responsibility for the master plan
- D. Networking
- E. Maintaining an overview
- F. Problem solving
- G. Record keeping
- H. Hiring, evaluating and firing the senior executive
- I. Spiritual leadership
- J. Maintaining an expectation of excellence

One of the basic duties of the board in its collective capacity is that of developing, nurturing, maintaining, and reviewing the school's vision and mission. In the list given above, you can see this explicitly with B, C, E, I and J. We live in a fallen world, and this means that all that is necessary for you to do in order to get a garden

full of weeds is . . . nothing. And all that is necessary for you to have your school become just another institutional mess is . . . nothing. If the board does not fulfill its charge, then the school at some point is going to be confronted with a mission meltdown.

As many classical Christian educators well know, the establishment of a successful school requires a good bit of blood, sweat and tears. Everyone has expended countless hours – sheet-rocking, cleaning, studying available textbooks and curricula, attending board meetings, teaching students and more. But, do you really want to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars so that after twenty years you look around and find that you have built an institution just like the one you left twenty years before?

This kind of problem does not happen overnight. Mission meltdown is almost always preceded by mission drift. The Psalmist gives us a good idea of how this pattern works in individual lives. “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression” (Ps. 19:12-13).

Note the progression—secret faults, presumptuous sins, and then great transgression. And note further that it is a progression of sin, from the lesser to the greater. This is why confession of sin is such a priority for those who want to build a school that honors God over generations (1 John 1:9).

At the same time, in the book of Ecclesiastes, the preacher tells us that we are not to be righteous over much. He obviously is not referring to true righteousness,

which this world cannot have too much of. But, there is a faux-righteousness, which likes to posture, and which has wrecked many schools in the conservative direction. But, wisdom is not made out of little blocks of wood. The other direction is a danger as well. There are those who think that latitude is charity, and that blurry, smudgy thinking is what constitutes a biblical worldview. When we come to learn that we are in a war, this means that we will begin behaving as though we are. This means we will take into account the fact that others want us to fall. Not everyone is our friend. The Psalmist sang before the Lord as one who had *enemies*.

In conclusion, board members need to understand that the board has a recognizable, corporate reality. It exists objectively, like an omelet. But though each egg is not the whole omelet, it is not possible to make an omelet without those individual eggs. And with regard to this latter point, it is not possible to make a good omelet without good eggs.

NOTES

1. Logos School Board Policy Manual, 4.2.
2. Logos School By-Laws, VIII.7.
3. Bobb Biehl and Theodore Engstrom, *Increasing Your Boardroom Confidence* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1988).

School Board Meetings for the Glory of God

by Don Post, Tall Oaks Classical School

“And the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild.” *The Paradoxes of Christianity* by G.K. Chesterton

...

How often have you attended meetings that were disorderly? Very little was accomplished. Those who spoke the loudest controlled the meeting. The meeting went on and on without any final conclusions. What was wrong?

All members of your school board must (or should) be able to express their opinions and to propose solutions. We are called to be good stewards of the time granted to us, to “make the best use of the time” (Eph. 5:16). Scripture requires us to show proper respect to those in authority over us. James reminds us “to be quick to listen, slow to speak” (James 1:19). If our meetings are to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31), “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

The purpose of *Robert’s Rules* is not only to keep order, but also to accomplish the board’s business while resolving any issues along the way. This presents a paradox: “in order to preserve its freedom to act, the body must impose regulation.”¹ If regulations must be imposed, however, they must be imposed justly on everyone involved in the meeting. *Robert’s Rules* contains many procedures that balance the need to impose regulations with the need to use the time and

talents of each board member well.

The importance of all meetings using the same body of rules cannot be overstated otherwise each meeting would be run by the chairman’s own rules. These rules are known as parliamentary procedures which, for the most part, were derived from the English

problem. *Robert’s Rules* is not something to turn to when you are in trouble, but to use as a normal course of procedure.

When you follow *Robert’s Rules*, it is much easier to navigate through difficult positions in which you find yourself. Several months ago, a board had voted

*Robert’s Rules contains many procedures
that balance the need to impose
regulations with the need to use the time
and talents of each board member well.*

Parliament. Today’s procedures, which were first published in 1876, are primarily the work of Henry Martyn Robert (1837–1923), a retired US Army brigadier general. The original writing, which contained 176 pages, is now 643 pages of text, tables and index.

So why use *Robert’s Rules*? Your school board meets to make decisions on a course of action that it believes must be taken for the most efficient operation of your school. *Robert’s Rules* is designed as a reference book to answer every question of parliamentary procedure. It gives direction on running a meeting from following an agenda to handling motions, debates and voting. It explains bylaws and other rules and how to use them. There is a chapter on frequently asked questions and, of most importance, a summary of motions—main, subsidiary, privileged, incidental, and their priority. They are never to be applied more tightly than what is good for that particular

down a motion, but had failed to count one board member’s vote. The board determined that the missing vote caused the motion to pass. Consulting *Robert’s Rules*, it discovered that the president could vote not only to break a tie but whenever his or her vote would affect the result. The president then voted against the motion, defeating it and returning it to the original vote. An accurate application of the rules keeps the meeting running properly and justly.

There are chapters on each of the different officers and what is expected of them. Since many of you reading this article are called to preside over meetings, you will find many helps and steps to equip you to be more effective in both planning and running efficient meetings. There are some great tables in the back which help you with the actual wording of motions, responding to motions and rules relating to motions: whether they are debatable, able to be amended, and what is the required vote.

This may sound like an enormous amount of work, but

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remember you have been called to Kingdom work. You only need to know twenty percent of the material eighty percent of the time. Your decisions have consequences which not only affect your school and students now, but for eternity. You are a workman who needs to be properly prepared in order to bring glory to God in your board meetings and in your school. I would encourage each board member to buy a copy of *Robert's Rules*, read it, and apply it to your meetings in order to facilitate orderly meetings for the glory of God.

NOTES

1. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 10th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing, 2000), p. 6.

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Timely and Wise Decision Making

by Ron Lee, Schaeffer Academy

The Christian school board is a crucible where the notions of secular vs. sacred collide. The school is a business entity and must meet the pressing demands of staying afloat with a positive

decisions which may prompt you to want to wait until the next meeting and even cause you to lose sleep, yet for the vast majority of the issues that come before the board, a decision just needs to

Rereading your mission statement, statement of faith, statement of purpose and your school history can help provide the fuel necessary to reignite your passion and vision for your school . . .

cash flow while making fair, viable and consistent policies which embody Christian charity toward its neighbor. The weight of decision making can produce heat and pressure in this environment. How can a group of diverse individuals refine and fuse their ideas into policies that benefit the school, without getting burned?

Procrastination is a formidable foe and one that can afflict the board decision-making process. We have all heard the adage, "Why do today what can be put off until tomorrow?" Our own personal and professional demands may contribute to this, but more often than not, we can procrastinate on board decisions because we place great value upon the work that needs to be accomplished by the board. The decisions you make influence such a broad and demanding clientele that they must be "just right." The selection of property or the final wording of a policy must be perfect since so much of the school's future is riding on it. These are major

be made. Even when you've done all of your "homework" there is sometimes no perfect answer. We ultimately must remember that we are finite individuals and all of our decisions must be made on the basis of good research, counsel and most of all, faith. To help overcome our battle with procrastination, we need to rest a greater confidence on our God. The verses in Hebrews 11: 1, 6 encourage us to abide in this truth, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

"School board members must be visionaries." We have all heard that to be successful your board must include individuals who wear that mantle. Visionaries not only help you dream big for your school, but also they can help you to foresee difficulties and be proactive in order to ease the decision-making process. Just

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think a moment of the various things that could go wrong at your school: a student accused of drug possession, student pregnancy, teacher insubordination, unpaid tuition, financial deficits and student attrition issues. These are real and not extreme cases, and are some of the risks facing your school. Considering the risks and creating policies in advance of crises is an attribute of being a visionary. Taking the initiative and prior action reduces conflict when your school would otherwise be caught unaware.

When the risk topic is discussed prior to the incident, personalities and individual relationships to the “perpetrator” do not need to cloud your judgment. You can be spared, or at least acquitted, of the accusation of favoritism or vendetta. It also allows you to provide policies that are more positive in approach, rather than punitive. For instance, when considering fundraising, rather than denying the ideas that others are currently promoting, you can list those activities which the school would support. You have created a boundary for people to work within and have limited the chance for offense.

Having greater time to create a policy or make a decision relieves the pressure, reduces the chance for error and increases the confidence in the action. A presumably well-written policy can have unforeseen implications. When creating policies under time constraints, a certain “loophole” or “situation” may never be considered and you could end up with a worse situation on your hands than the issue you were originally trying to resolve. Having a proactive approach to decision making can allow more time to

create a policy. That extra time allows you to perform extended research, obtain counsel and even vet the draft policy with others before final implementation.

All of your decisions must be from a principled approach. The Bible speaks to many of the circumstances which the board must address. Even in those instances where the Bible does not provide explicit instruction, you can derive implicit direction. Such exercises require discernment and application of a Christian worldview, thinking redemptively and casting your thoughts to ultimate purposes. Rereading your mission statement, statement of faith, statement of purpose and your school history can help provide the fuel necessary to reignite your passion and vision for your school, and can reorient your decisions.

Even though it is not a defined board responsibility, an underlying objective is to please a variety of people. The intrinsic existence of the school is dependent upon how well it provides services that fulfill the expectations of the parents and students. The implementation of sound policies and the application of astute business savvy are vital in sustaining that trust, confidence and rapport. We can easily get caught up in the anxieties which accompany that pressure to perform. Seeking people’s approval can take its toll on your vigor. In our fallen world, the realities of this task may seem impossible and the school board member may wither from the heat of this crucible. In the book, *The Call*, Os Guinness does not negate our responsibilities to such an audience; rather, he passionately redirects us to focus our attention to “one audience that trumps all others—the Audience

of One.” As you fulfill your call as a board member, may you make all your decisions under the banner and audience of the One. May He sustain you in the fiery furnace as He refines you and your board for His purposes.

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Covenantal Succession: Surviving the Founder's Syndrome

by George Grant, Parish Presbyterian Church

In 1564, Theodore Beza accepted the unenviable challenge of succeeding his friend and mentor, John Calvin, as the pastor of St. Pierre's Church, and as the leader of the Reformation in Geneva and throughout the French-speaking world. It is never an easy thing for even a proven, capable leader to follow a great visionary, a beloved founder, a successful reformer and a soaring intellect. Calvin was all of those things and more. Beza, on the other hand, was anything but a proven capable leader.

Prior to coming to Geneva just nine years earlier, Beza was an articulate and gifted proponent of Reformation ideas and ideals, but he had not enjoyed much outward or visible success. His efforts to establish academies of learning in Tübingen and Lausanne ultimately failed. His ambassadorial efforts amongst the Piedmont Waldensians, at the Colloquy of Worms and with Peter Viret and William Farel in Berne were stymied by incessant conflict, controversy and dissent.

Even after Calvin finally took him in and provided him with a measure of security and stability in Geneva, Beza's life and ministry remained mired in difficulty and frustration. His efforts to establish an academy there were delayed for nearly four years. His literary ambitions were likewise subject to constant interruptions and obstructions. And he was thrust into a host of protracted personal and doctrinal hubbubs that almost exhausted his time and resources.

At Calvin's death, everyone had good warrant to expect that Beza would ultimately wilt

and wither under the white hot spotlight of international scrutiny. Calvin's shoes were too big for anyone to fill—much less a perennial also-ran like Beza.

Instead, against all odds, he actually succeeded remarkably. Over the course of the next

Reformer began preparing his disciple, embracing him publicly as a partner in ministry and in life. As one biographer asserted, "Calvin's obvious affection for Beza, his trust in the younger man's abilities, and his willingness to yield to his charge wide-ranging

It is sometimes hard to remember when our schools are still in the day-to-day-survival stage that we need to be planning for the future—a future when our founders, our stalwart board members and our lead teachers are no longer on the scene.

four decades, he would solidify, strengthen, expand and unify the church in Geneva and its reforming movement. He confirmed Calvin's legacy. He celebrated Calvin's leadership. He upheld Calvin's ideals. And in so doing, he made his own substantial contribution to the work of the Reformation by demonstrating humility in nurturing a shared vision rather than grasping for the shiny ring of making one's own mark. He admirably demonstrated the beauty and power of covenantal succession.

While Beza quite obviously brought great gifts to the monumental task of succeeding an iconic founder, in many ways, it was Calvin himself who ensured that his young friend would ultimately be up to the challenge.

Early in his tenure in Geneva, Calvin began to entrust unique responsibilities to Beza. Calvin somehow saw in Beza what few others did—and so the great

authority laid firm foundations for Beza's eventual success."

Calvin was never grasping for control, for credit, for prominence or for preeminence. His multi-generational perspective and his commitment to covenantal succession enabled him to invest unhesitatingly in Beza. By 1561, Calvin had even arranged to share preaching duties with Beza on alternate weeks.

Another biographer has noted, "Without being a great dogmatician like his master, nor a creative genius in the ecclesiastical realm, Beza certainly had qualities which enabled him to be the leader of the second generation Reformers . . . But, it was Calvin's great confidence in him that paved the way for all his later successes."

As a founder of a number of institutions, churches, schools and organizations, there are many lessons I need to learn from the example of Calvin and Beza; lessons I suspect that they may have learned from the examples of Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, Elijah and

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Elisha and Paul and Timothy.

If we are to survive—and even thrive—during seasons of transition and succession, we must first and foremost be very intentional in preparing for those seasons long before they are forced upon us by the dumb certainties of experience. As any insurance agent would remind us, we can't delay preparing for eventualities until the crisis is upon us. It is sometimes hard to remember when our schools are still in the day-to-day-survival stage that we need to be planning for the future—a future when our founders, our stalwart board members and our lead teachers are no longer on the scene. But, remember, we must. Calvin was very deliberate in his commitment to and investment in Beza. He looked forward to the day when Beza would stand in his stead—and he acted accordingly with great purposefulness.

Second, in order to prepare genuinely for smooth covenantal succession, founders have to lead the way themselves. They have to identify, train, invest in and send forth a host of young disciples. They have to “give away the shop” continually. Their job is to “work themselves out of a job,” as J. Hudson Taylor used to say about foreign missionaries. John Maxwell has memorably stated, “Collaboration is multiplication.” Calvin did not grasp at the reins. Instead, he put them firmly in the hands of Beza—and then patiently taught his disciple just how to manage them.

Third, this means turning over responsibility for essential tasks early and often, even when the possibility of failure looms large. The whole of history contradicts the modern cult of monomaniacal micro-managing.

Throughout the past, wise leaders have demonstrated the immense long-term value of team building, even at the risk of short-term inefficiencies. They have shown us the true significance of humble reliance upon others. They have willingly shared credit and glory and prosperity with others, knowing full well that they have hardly sacrificed anything as a consequence. Likewise, they have known that cooperation, accountability and collaboration offered them substantially greater benefits. No man or woman is an island. There are no successful loners—not in business, not in education, not in politics and not in life. Wild cards trump the best intentions. Rogue agents jeopardize the securest operations. Even the archetypal Lone Ranger had Tonto, to say nothing of Silver! There is a vast difference between the leader who must position himself ahead of the pack and the servant-leader, who will intentionally place himself in the middle, or even at the back. It is the difference between following a man or a mission. It is impossible to tell the story of Calvin and the reforming movement he brought to Geneva without simultaneously telling the story of his open-handed, giving relationship with Beza.

Fourth, this necessarily involves real and substantial risk. But then, leaders always risk. Leaders do not play it safe. Leaders lead. They invest where others would never think of investing. They do not wait until the path is already clear ahead. Leaders get things done. They do not simply preserve the status quo. They actually work rather than positioning themselves for the sake of appearance. As a result, leaders simply cannot please everyone

all of the time. Doing the right thing is dangerous. It is bound to provoke a ferocious reaction. Anyone who acts on principle will surely attract criticism. Anyone who pursues a determined course of action is bound to meet equally resolute opposition. People can only argue with someone who has taken a position. Critics can only rail against actual programs. Opponents must have something to oppose. Thus, if you wish to remain in everyone's good graces, do nothing whatsoever, decide nothing whatsoever and stand for nothing whatsoever. Abandoning the thing worth doing is always a safer and more popular course of action. It is also wrong. As Teddy Roosevelt proclaimed, “Better faithful than famous. Honor before prominence.” Calvin took a great risk with Beza. But, it was a risk that he knew he must take.

Finally, in order to make the institutional transition from founders to disciples, it is vital that the processes, expectations and assumptions be altogether transparent. It is vital for leaders to help their entire communities toward buy-in. There must be consensus going forward or there will be no going forward. The worst possible scenario for any transition is to have to face a succession crisis (indeed, some of the world's most bitter civil wars have resulted from just such scenarios). Calvin worked hard to give Beza visible opportunities to win over the people of Geneva: he helped to institutionalize orderly processes; he built a strong and united support leadership team around Beza; he constantly kept Beza and the Genevan church focused on the Gospel rather than the myriad of peripheral issues that might otherwise vie for their attentions; he constantly prayed with and for

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Beza; he helped to refine, develop and maximize Beza's already substantial gifts. His greatest desire was that Beza's legacy might one day even outstrip his own.

In our still youthful movement of classical and Christian schools, we have been blessed with a goodly number of dynamic founders. And we are just now coming to the time when we will have to survive the passing of these leaders from the scene. How we invest, how we prepare and how we build consensus now will surely do much to determine what our long-term impact in this poor, fallen world will be.

Common Questions About School Boards

by Patch Blakey, Ron Lee, Don Post and Douglas Wilson

1. How much daily input should a board have on the routine operation of the school?

In general, the board may have input on the routine operation of the school, but not daily input. The input should be during a duly called meeting of the board with the headmaster or the person in charge of the daily running of the school. The board should have no authority except when it sits to conduct business, or in that rare time when they appoint a commission of the board to accomplish some particular task. Individual board members should have no independent authority unless it has been specifically delegated to them by a vote of the board for a particular task. (D. Post)

2. What pitfalls should a start-up school avoid in the selection of its first board?

It is tempting to select individuals who are influential in the local community. Individuals may possess skills that are necessary for your success, but if they are not philosophically aligned with the classical and Christian vision of your school, you must pass them by. It would be better to contract for their services. It is more important that the board consist of individuals who have a common mission and passion for the school than to try to appease appearances. (R. Lee)

3. What considerations should the school board give to selecting replacement board members for those who have resigned? (P. Blakey)

The school board should have a process established that enables it to evaluate potential board

members on a number of issues before they are even nominated as a candidate. At a minimum, the board should verify that each of the potential candidates are members of a Christ-centered, Bible-believing church in the community; they are in agreement with the school's statement of faith; their practice of life is consistent with their profession of faith; they are knowledgeable of and have demonstrated commitment to the classical Christian methodology used at the school; they are in agreement with the school's written philosophical positions; and that they have expertise which is of value to the school.

4. What does an administrator do if the school board is not complying with the bylaws and policies it has established for the operation of the school?

There are two ways to go. If the violations are egregious, and the issues involved are important, then the administrator should formally request the board correct the deficiency. If they refuse to do so, then the administrator should appeal to the entity that the board is accountable to. If there are no orderly procedures in place for making such an appeal, he should submit his resignation.

If the violations are not egregious, then the administrator should propose to the board that they change the bylaws and policies in order to conform to the actual practices of the board and school. (D. Wilson)

5. What is the role of the board in helping to raise funds for the school?

In the early stage of the school,

Common Questions . . .

board members may need to be the chief fundraisers. Fundraising may not be its strength, yet the board is responsible for the school's financial stability. Hiring a professional or soliciting the services of a committed parent who has excellent social acumen might be an important step in expanding fundraising potential. (R. Lee)

6. To whom is the board accountable?

The board is accountable to whatever entity its formal constitutional arrangements specify. Usually, this will be to a church or church board, or to a parents' association of some kind. If that accountability is not specified, then the board is not really accountable to anyone, and such lack of specificity is not wise. In addition, the board is accountable to God to submit to whatever governmental accountability has been established. (D. Wilson)

7. Can a board be involved too little in the operation of the school?

This question depends on the definition of "be involved." If "be involved" is defined by being present on a regular basis to give input on the routine operation of the school, then the answer is no (see #1 above). If "be involved" means being present to observe the running of the school and having regular discussions with the staff to have a better idea of the operation of the school, then the answer is yes. If it means the board member is not involved as a parent or does not keep up with his responsibilities as a board member, then the answer is yes. The distinction should be understood between policies and

procedures. The board passes policies which give direction to the headmaster. The headmaster writes procedures which implement those policies. The board does not need to be involved in writing the procedures. Board members should be involved in school life because it is their calling to be responsible for the education of their own children, as well as those in the entire school. (D. Post)

8. Should the school administrator be a voting member of the school board? Why or why not?

No. The school administrator is an employee of the board. Even though the administrator has the direct pulse of the school and can provide the most realistic insight into the daily occurrences at school, his conflict of interest is too great to be an effective board member. The vast majority of board decisions deal directly with what he is expected to enforce. The administrator would have to recuse himself from the majority of decisions, essentially nullifying the primary board member responsibility of voting. In contrast, the administrator should be the most influential person to the board. He can lobby for his preferences, yet the administrator only reports to the board. This way, the board can assure the parents that it is in control and is maintaining proper checks and balances. (R. Lee)

9. Typically, should the school administrator be included in the meetings of the school board? Under what circumstances should the administrator be excluded?

Typically, yes, he should be included. The administrator is the person who represents the

school to the board, and the board to the school. In order to do this effectively, he has to have good communication with both. The administrator is the telephone wire between the board and the school. Exceptions would be during certain aspects of the board's evaluation of the administrator, or any circumstances when there would be an apparent conflict of interest (e.g., a decision being made concerning academic probation for the administrator's son). (D. Wilson)

10. How essential is a board of directors to the successful operation of a school? (P. Blakey)

The board acts as the "head and heart" of the school. It initiates the bylaws which ultimately define the authority and limits of the board, as well as the mission of the school. Certainly one person could do this on his own. However, Proverbs indicates that there is wisdom and safety in a multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6). In addition, God is trinitarian, or community oriented, with each member of the Godhead selflessly serving the others. The board needs to form itself consistently with the pattern given in Scripture and expect to derive the benefits that the Lord promises.

11. How responsible is a board of directors for the failure of a school?

I believe ultimately it is the board of directors' responsibility for the failure of a school. It should be receiving the necessary input (finances, development director's report, headmaster's report, etc.) and asking the necessary questions in order to have a clear picture of the state of the school. It should take the necessary steps to

Common Questions . . .

make adjustments to policies and personnel when the school is being steered in the wrong direction or is going through a major storm. The board has fiduciary responsibilities in both giving of its own resources and seeking other sources of income to support the school. The most important aspect is for the board of directors to be sure that neither it nor the school is experiencing mission drift. This appears to be the most common problem, whether it is departure from the mission or failure to understand and properly implement the mission. (D. Post)

12. How much authority for the operation of a school should be delegated to the administrator and how much should be retained by the school board? In what areas is this mandatory and in which is it simply preferential (for example: hiring, firing, student discipline, curriculum selection, establishing the daily routine).

All the day-to-day authority should be held by the administrator. That is what the administrator is for. The board should create policy which the administrator has to apply to particular situations. If something comes up for which there is no policy, the administrator makes a decision, and requests a new policy for next time, or he asks the board chair to convene a meeting to give him direction. In our experience at Logos, the administration screens teaching applicants, and the board interviews the finalists. The board hires, but the administrator has full authority to fire. The administration has full authority to discipline students, with the parents having recourse to appeal to the board if they so desire. The curriculum committee of

the board makes curriculum recommendations to the board, which the board approves, and the administration implements. The administrator prepares the budget, which the board approves, and the administrator executes. And so on. The board should be engaged enough to know what it is doing, and not so engaged that it micro-manages or undercuts the administrator. (D. Wilson)

13. What are noteworthy conflicts of interest that a school board should seek to avoid? How might a board manage these conflicts of interest if they currently exist?

One of the obvious conflicts is government intrusion into the operation of the school. The ACCS website provides a detailed position paper concerning that subject. (See ACCS > Position Papers > ACCS Statement on Vouchers.) Another common conflict is nepotism within the school staff and board. The most loyal and knowledgeable staff member could be the spouse of a board member or vice versa. The board could set a strict policy prohibiting such activity or establish enforceable checks and balances. Such policies might state that one spouse should not directly report to the other and the board member would recuse himself if a spouse's salary or personnel issue were to be discussed. Board members must annually disclose conflicts of interest to satisfy nonprofit tax laws. The school could use the questions from that document as a source for evaluating other business transactions in which the school is engaged. (R. Lee)

I am sure the list of noteworthy

conflicts of interest which can arise from our sinful human natures and from the desire to provide our children with the best possible education is endless. Remember that this endeavor is not primarily about you or your children but the glory of God and His Kingdom work. You avoid these conflicts by remaining daily in the Word and prayer, being involved in the covenantal life of a church, being accountable to others for your own character and manner of life, being quick to repent of your own sins, and seeking to make every board decision according to God's Word. When you find yourself in the middle of a conflict, be quick to repent of your part in it, do not try to hide it, seek the wisdom of others and do quickly what God's Word requires. Remember you are not the savior of your school but only Christ is. "Cast your cares on Him because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). (D. Post)

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